

02352

1968/11/23

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Background

19

Saturday, November 23, 1968 -- 11:30 a.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Sec. Clifford's Press Conference of November 12, 1968

This memorandum for the record is set down at the instruction of the President.

Sec. Clifford's remarks on November 12, 1968, indicating that we might proceed with talks in Paris without the GVN, were made without prior discussion or clearance with the President. At that time the President was not prepared to act along the lines that the Secretary suggested; nor was he prepared to clear a public statement indicating that this would be a possibility.

On the other hand, the President had encouraged Sec. Clifford and Sec. Rusk to have press conferences. He knew that Sec. Clifford would have a press conference on November 12, 1968. They did not discuss the content of his position before the event.

This does not mean that the President might not, at some stage, have taken action to open talks without the GVN. But he did not feel at the time that the situation justified such action. The President spoke to me to the same effect as the above on the day of Sec. Clifford's press conference, when word of its content came in over the press wires.

W. A. R. F. Rostow